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ABSTRACT

This handbook draws attention to the problem of dropouts in Massachusetts and offers solutions to increase the chances that all students will succeed. It suggests the need for systemic, school-based changes to foster learning environments that meet the emotional, social, physical, and cognitive needs of all students and staff. The handbook is comprised of a preface, three chapters, and a conclusion. Chapter 1, "The Scope of the Problem," includes the following sections: (1) "Who Is Dropping Out?"; (2) "Costs of Dropping Out"; (3) "Factors Related to Dropping Out"; and (4) "Myths and Realities of Dropping Out." Chapter 2, "Strategies to Reduce Dropouts," advocates the following approaches; (1) "Promote Systemic School Change," including the components of governance and leadership; school climate; academic, attendance, and discipline policies; school organization; instruction; student support services; staff development; and parent involvement; (2) "Support Diversity of Choice"; and (3) "Build Community Support." Chapter 3, "Planning for Change and Improvement," proposes a model comprising the following steps: (1) "Form a School Improvement Team"; (2) "Conduct a School-Community Needs Assessment"; (3) "Develop a Plan for Change and Improvement"; (4) "Gain Local Support and Approval of the Plan"; (5) "Implement the Plan"; and (6) "Evaluation and Replication." A list of 39 references is included. Resources on dropout prevention/restructuring and suggested readings are appended. (AF)

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Changing Schools and Communities:
A Systemic Approach to Dropout Prevention

Massachusetts Department of Education

UD 027 215

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From the Commissioner

A comprehensive strategy for dropout prevention:

Each year approximately 14,000 students drop out of the Commonwealth's public schools. As a result, one out of five entering freshmen does not complete high school. The majority of these students will join a growing number of citizens who face numerous barriers to leading productive lives and participating in a democratic society. The tragic loss of these young people represents a grave problem for Massachusetts.

Given the magnitude of the problem, schools and communities need to rethink traditional notions of dropout prevention. This handbook, Changing Schools and Communities: A Systemic Approach to Dropout Prevention, is an attempt to do just that. The handbook presents information on who is dropping out and factors that contribute to a student's decision to drop out. It also suggests strategies for schools and communities to consider in addressing the problem.

Three approaches to dropout prevention are presented: promoting systemic change, supporting a diversity of program choice, and building community support. When integrated as a whole , these strategies are designed to benefit all students. Rather than a "quick fix," these recommendations, based on experience and research, lay the groundwork for schools and communities to work together to ensure the success of every student.

It is time to begin an honest and open discussion of why students are dropping out of school, and how we can restructure our schools and community institutions better to serve the diverse needs of our students. This handbook is intended to be a useful tool in this tremendously important effort.

Harold Raynolds Jr

Harold Raynolds, Jr.
Commissioner

Changing Schools and Communities: A Systemic Approach to Dropout Prevention

November 1989

Developed by:

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Preface

The dropout problem is one of our nation's tragedies. It is not just the problem of our public schools; it is a community, state and national dilemma and one which we can no longer afford to ignore. The dropouts of today will become the have-nots of tomorrow, at a time in our history when we need all of our citizens to contribute to the growth and care of our nation and world.

Preventing school dropouts takes time, commitment and additional resources. Although we are fiscally constrained, we must heed the old proverb that "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." Statistics show that every dollar spent on successfully keeping a student in school saves nearly five dollars in future costs to society.

This handbook is for anyone in the Commonwealth who is concerned about students leaving school prior to graduation — school committee members, superintendents, principals and other administrators, teachers, counselors, legislators, mayors and other municipal officials, business and higher education leaders, community agency representatives, parents and students. The purpose of the handbook is to draw attention to the problem of dropouts, and to offer solutions to increase the chances that all students will succeed.

Chapter 1
The Scope of the Dropout Problem

Who Is Dropping Out?

At the National Level

Twenty-five million American adults are high school dropouts, and each year another 750,000 students leave school before graduating. An estimated 25 percent of all entering freshmen quit high school prior to graduation. Equally as troubling are the number of youth currently attending school, but not achieving. Of the 2.4 million who graduate each year, as many as one in four cannot read, write or compute at the eighth grade level. Many of these individuals have little understanding of the society in which they live, and lack the confidence that they can be productive citizens.

The dropout problem is most dramatic in our nation's urban areas where a disproportionate number of children live in poverty. **Current research indicates that youth from poor families are three to four times more likely to drop out than those from more affluent households**. Thus, when three-quarters of Black youth spend some time in poverty, it is understandable that 35 percent of this ethnic group leave school before graduating. The disproportionate number of Hispanic and Native American children who live in poverty also helps to explain the high dropout rate among these groups. Nationally, 40 percent of Hispanic students and 48 percent of Native American students do not graduate from high school.

In some large cities, it is estimated that 75 percent of all Puerto Rican students do not graduate.

In Massachusetts

In Massachusetts, **dropping out is defined as the act of a student age sixteen or older voluntarily leaving school prior to graduation for reasons other than transfer to another school**. Currently, nearly 14,000 Massachusetts public school students drop out of school each year. This is equivalent to losing the entire student body of ten high schools. At this rate, 20 percent of each entering freshman class will not graduate. Compared to other states, Massachusetts ranks eighteenth in terms of the number of students who complete high school. Ohio, Pennsylvania and New Jersey, industrial states that are demographically similar to Massachusetts, graduate a higher proportion of their students.

Most Students Drop Out in Grades Ten and Eleven

Annual dropout rates (the proportion of students who drop out each year) are highest in grades ten and eleven (6 percent in each grade) when students reach sixteen years old, the age at which attending school is no longer mandatory. The annual rate is lowest in grade twelve (4 percent) and moderate in grade nine (5 percent).

In Massachusetts, students who stop attending school before they are sixteen are reported as

truants, not as dropouts. Therefore, the relatively high dropout rate in grade nine reflects what is likely a result of excessive grade retention practices. Since ninth graders are usually fourteen or fifteen years old, it is reasonable to speculate that grade nine dropouts, who must be at least sixteen, were retained in grade at some time during their school experience.

Males Drop Out at a Slightly Higher Rate than Females

The male dropout rate is 21 percent, the female rate 18 percent. Recent research has shown that certain factors associated with dropping out such as low socioeconomic status and low parental education levels apply equally to males and females.

Urban and Rural Areas have the Highest Proportion of Dropouts

Eleven percent of Massachusetts public school students live in poverty, and ten percent have limited proficiency in English. In the Commonwealth's urban areas, however, these proportions double - 22 and 20 percent respectively. Since research has shown that poverty and limited English proficiency are factors that place students at risk of dropping out, it is not surprising that two-thirds of the students who drop out annually in Massachusetts are from urban districts. Over a four-year period, this means that more than 30 percent of the state's urban students fail to graduate.

The dropout problem is not limited to our cities. Seventeen percent of the students in small rural communities do not complete high school as compared to 5 percent in residential suburbs. Higher levels of poverty and lack of access to support services in rural areas help to explain this difference.

Dropout Rates Vary Widely Among Ethnic Groups

Four-year dropout rates in Massachusetts — the percentage of students who may not graduate are shown in Table 1. Rates are broken down by ethnicity, gender, kind of community and grade. Although the dropout rate for White students at 17 percent is the lowest among the various ethnic groups, nearly three out of four dropouts in the Commonwealth are White. Comparable to the national figures, a high percentage of minority students drop out in Massachusetts: 36 percent of Black students, 45 percent of Hispanic students, 40 percent of Native American students, and 18 percent of Asian students. As the level of poverty and English proficiency varies within each of these minority groups, so do the dropout rates. For example, rates for Puerto Rican students are considerably higher than rates for other Hispanic ethnic groups.

Similarly, the dropout rate for newly arrived Southeast Asian refugee students far exceeds the rate for all Asian students. In school districts containing high numbers of these students, the Asian dropout rate ranges from 30 to 50 percent. In addition to having limited English proficiency, these children have spent many traumatic years in war-torn, poverty-stricken countries and refugee camps where they were deprived of formal schooling.

Additional statistical information on Massachusetts school dropouts is available in the publication *Massachusetts Dropout Report, 1987-88*, available from the Department of Education, Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation.

Table 1
Massachusetts Annual and Projected Four-Year Dropout Rates 1987-88

	Number of Dropouts	Annual Rate (%)	Four-Year Rate (%)
Statewide (grades 9-12)	13,983	5.4	20
Grade			
Grade 9	3,271	5.0	-
Grade 10	4,230	6.5	-
Grade 11	4,001	6.1	-
Grade 12	2,481	3.8	-
Gender			
Male	8,093	6.2	21
Female	5,890	4.6	18
Racial/Ethnic Groupings			
Asian	298	4.8	18
Black	1,808	10.6	36
Hispanic	1,727	14.4	45
Native American	54	11.8	40
White	10,096	4.5	17
Kind of Community			
Urban Centers	9,274	8.9	31
Econ. Developed Suburbs	1,883	2.6	10
Growth Communities	1,275	4.3	16
Residential Suburbs	358	1.4	5
Rural Economic Centers	988	4.4	17
Small Rural Communities	115	3.5	14
Resort/Retirement/Artistic	90	2.9	11

The Annual Dropout Rate is the percentage of students who dropped out between July 1, 1986 and June 30, 1987. The Projected Four-Year Rate is an estimate of the proportion of students who entered grade nine in 1986 who may not graduate.

Source: *Massachusetts Dropout Report, 1987-88.*

Costs of Dropping Out

There was a time when a high school education was not essential to becoming a productive citizen and enjoying a relatively high quality of life. Today, however, dropping out has serious consequences for dropouts, their families, and society.

Dropouts Pay a Personal Price

Most dropouts are faced with the psychological toll and social stigma of their actions. As one dropout said, "All my dreams are gone." While dropouts' self-esteem may rise in the first three to six months after leaving school, it usually falls soon thereafter when they are faced with the reality that they lack the skills and knowledge to fulfill their desires. Thus, dropping out becomes a lifetime burden.

Dropping Out Lowers Earning Power and Opportunities

The current movement from a manufacturing to a service-based and technology-oriented economy has nearly destroyed the earning prospects for less educated people. National statistics indicate that earnings for young men and women who quit high school fell by more than 25 percent (adjusted for inflation) over the past three decades. Even high school graduates saw their earnings drop by 9 percent over this period, while those of college graduates rose 6 percent. Graduating from high

school is not enough anymore. As a result, the gap between the "haves and have-nots" in our society is widening rather than narrowing.

The polarization between skilled and unskilled workers in Massachusetts is already evident. Although the state enjoys almost full employment, the unemployment rate of unskilled and undereducated inner-city youth in the Commonwealth ranks among the highest in the nation. In fact, three out of every four jobs in the state currently require some education or training beyond standard programs, and the demand for a broadly-skilled workforce is growing rapidly.

Dropouts Threaten the Future of Business and Industry

One of Massachusetts' biggest problems is its declining youth population. The number of eighteen year olds in the Commonwealth is among the lowest in the nation. This is alarming for businesses in the state that already face a lack of qualified applicants for existing jobs. Nationally, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce estimates that American industry spends nearly $40 billion a year to provide remedial training for new employees, both dropouts and graduates, who lack adequate skills. Undoubtedly the economy of Massachusetts will grind to a halt unless a greater proportion of youth's potential is developed to its fullest.

Students at risk of dropping out must be considered resources and not problems if this nation is to

remain competitive with other industrialized countries. As one researcher has found, "much of the success in Japan stems from the fact that blue collar workers there can interpret advanced blueprints and perform sophisticated tasks on the factory floor far better than blue collars in the United States" (White, 1987).

Dropouts Place a Tremendous Burden on Social Services

Social costs of dropping out include increased subsidies for public welfare and health services, greater incidences of crime, and lost tax revenues among others. For dropouts aged twenty-five to thirty-four, these combined increased costs to the nation total $77 billion each year. National estimates also indicate that dropouts require 35 percent more social services than high school graduates. In Massachusetts, nearly 60 percent of prison inmates are dropouts, and each prisoner costs the state more than $24,000 per year. In comparison, a college student costs the taxpayer around $3,000; a Headstart child approximately $3,500. Unquestionably, the benefits gained from educating all our children far outweigh the costs of not doing so.

Dropouts Weaken a Democratic Society

Changing demographics make the dropout problem even more troubling. Projections indicate that by the year 2000 more children will be living in poverty than ever before. This is significant since poverty is such a powerful indicator of failure in school. Forty percent of those living in poverty today are children, and these

children are having more children. Fifty-nine percent of the children born in 1983 will live in one-parent households before the age of fifteen. Many of these households will be headed by single mothers with lower economic opportunities.

Eighty percent of dropouts say they do not want to vote because the issues are too complicated (Hodgkinson, 1989). When significant numbers of our citizenry are poor, are not knowledgeable about national and world affairs, do not vote and are not involved in the community and politics, they become increasingly disenfranchised and our nation is weakened. Each dropout represents wasted human potential, lost opportunities, and a failure by society to fully prepare its citizenry for productive lives. We must face this challenge and consider how we can change our schools and communities to address this growing concern.

Factors Related to Dropping Out

When considering factors that may contribute to a student's decision to drop out, educators traditionally have focused upon student-related background characteristics. Background characteristics such as being poor, a linguistic minority, a member of a large family, or a member of a single-headed household have been shown to be correlates of those who drop out. Similarly, student experiences such as retention in grade, chronic absenteeism, or academic failure have proven to be reliable indicators of individual students who may potentially leave school before graduating.

While these factors can characterize a dropout, many youth who experience adverse environmental conditions do graduate. This feat is often achieved when at-risk students find help and guidance from at least one successful peer, caring adult or supportive family member. A good school can help at-risk students succeed.

Although student background characteristics can be described, they cannot easily be changed. School staff have little or no influence over their students' socioeconomic status, primary language, or family composition. **Moreover, many students' negative behaviors in school are only symptomatic responses to adverse school, home and community factors. These behaviors will not change until the causal factors that contribute to them are changed.**

Therefore, it is imperative that those interested in reducing student dropouts focus less on student background characteristics and behaviors and more on school and community conditions that place students at risk. Emphasis must be placed on those conditions that can be changed. If retention in grade leads to dropping out, educators must implement alternatives to that practice. If lack of support services leads to dropping out, linkages between school and community service-providers must be developed. What is important about these changes is that they serve all students, and prevent students from becoming at-risk. Table II provides a partial listing of factors that may relate to dropping out.

Table II Dropout Indicators

School, Community and Home Factors That May Relate to Dropping Out

School Factors
- Large enrollment
- Large classes
- Low parent/community involvement
- Excessive use of suspension
- Widespread nonpromotions
- Punitive attendance practices
- Segregation by ability grouping or tracking
- Institutional racism
- Unsafe and disorderly school climate
- Lack of appropriate role models
- Low teacher expectations
- Lack of professional development opportunities
- Lack of diversity in instructional styles
- Rigid daily and weekly schedules
- Lack of cross-cultural sensitivity
- Raised academic standards without adequate support
- Unresponsive and fragmented curriculum
- Lack of effective student assessment
- Lack of educational leadership
- Lack of participation in school governance by key constituents

Community Factors
- Lack of support services
- Low business involvement in schools
- Lack of coordination of services
- Lack of affordable housing
- Unsafe neighborhoods
- Proliferation of controlled substances
- High unemployment
- Exploitation of youth labor
- Lack of adequate health care

Home Factors
- High mobility
- Low parental involvement in school
- Numerous family responsibilities
- Low educational attainment of parent(s)
- Few study aids at home
- Little opportunity for learning outside of school
- Low expectations

Resulting Behaviors of At-Risk Youth

- Frequent health and social problems
- Grade retention
- Multiple suspensions
- Excessive class cutting
- Poor study habits
- Low expectations of entering a higher education institution
- Dissatisfaction with his/her education
- Low personal expectations
- Violation of the law and court involvement
- Over fifteen hours per week of work
- Low career expectations
- Academic failure
- High absenteeism
- High mobility
- Uninvolved in extracurricula activities
- Social isolation
- Teenage parenthood
- Social group of older dropouts
- Chronic tardiness
- Stronger involvement with work than with school

Myths and Realities of Dropping Out

When asked about why they dropped out of school, students give a wide range of answers. They tend to blame themselves equally as much as they find fault with their schools and communities. However, dropouts often tend to blame themselves for their failure, because it is easier than questioning such basic societal institutions as our schools. This is compounded by ineffective exit interviews that focus on students' future plans rather than the school and community factors.

The widely respected national longitudinal study, *High School and Beyond,* conducted interviews of dropouts in 1980, and asked why they left school. The eight most frequent responses are shown in Table III.

Table III What Students Say

Reason	Total(%)	Male(%)	Female(%)
Did not like school	33	35	31
Poor grades	33	36	30
Offered a job	19	27	11
Got married	18	7	31
Couldn't get along with teacher	15	21	9
Had to support family	11	14	8
Pregnancy	11	-	23
Expelled or suspended	10	13	5

Source: *High School and Beyond*

Four of the responses are school-related: "did not like school", "poor grades", "couldn't get along with teachers", and "expelled or suspended." Recent research also suggests that the other four reasons -- "offered a job", "got married", "had to support family", and "pregnancy" -- only mask hidden dissatisfaction with school.

On the following page are listed common myths and realities of why students drop out of school.

Myths and Realities of Dropping Out

Myth	Reality
The act of dropping out is a spontaneous one.	Students who drop out do so only after an extended period of conscious deliberation, after a pattern of experiencing school failure, and after trying unsuccessfully to get help.
Students who drop out have low self-esteem, which is lowered further after they drop out.	The self-esteem of students who drop out equals that of college-bound graduates and is higher than that of non college-bound graduates. Additionally, the self-esteem of most youth who drop out of school rises in the first three to six months after leaving.
Many students drop out because of family-related reasons.	According to the *High School and Beyond Study* , students most frequently identify school-related factors as reasons for dropping out.
Students identified as at-risk in the early grades are destined to drop out of school.	Practice has demonstrated that, given high expectations, high content and high support, at-risk students can succeed in school.
Girls drop out because they get pregnant.	Only 40 percent of girls who drop out are pregnant. As well, those girls who get pregnant or married only do so after experiencing school failure and rejection, and subsequently feel as though they have a lack of life options.

Myth	Reality
Boys drop out for economic reasons.	Most boys who drop out do so after experiencing school failure and rejection. They experience more success and a higher self-esteem at work than they do at school. As well, they believe that a high school diploma may not get them anywhere, and feel they have little hope of attending college or other post-secondary programs.
Dropouts are not bright.	Dropouts represent a range of academic abilities. Most dropouts are of average IQ.
The typical dropout is an ethnic minority.	When dropout data is controlled for socioeconomic factors, students drop out at the same rate regardless of their ethnicity. Poverty remains the single biggest indicator of dropping out.
Students drop out because their parents do not care.	Most parents do care, but do not know how to help their child. They feel alienated from the school and do not know how to access services or maneuver within the system.

Chapter 2
Strategies to Reduce Dropouts

"The greatest risk poor and minority children may face is that which comes from our incorrect perception of the problem. Such a perception causes us to blame the child for what we failed to provide and to search for solutions through an examination of children rather than systems (Comer, 1987)." Too often, society has adopted a "blame the victim" mentality towards the dropout problem. However, the perception that the student or family alone is to blame fails to recognize school and community factors that contribute to dropping out of school.

Since the number of dropouts has not decreased, it is clear that schools and communities need to rethink traditional notions of dropout prevention. Educators and community leaders must begin to assess and change those factors within our schools and community institutions that contribute to students' decisions to drop out of school.

The following three approaches to dropout prevention, if integrated as a whole, can provide schools and communities with a comprehensive strategy to help students succeed in school. These approaches are not "fads," but proven practices with demonstrated positive outcomes.

I. Promote Systemic School Change

To address the underlying causes of school dropouts, systemic, school-based changes are needed to foster learning environments that meet the emotional, social, physical and cognitive needs of all students and staff. Fundamental changes are needed in traditional school organization, governance, policies, programs and

practices to improve student learning and development, enhance the school climate, and support teachers as professionals.

Why A Systemic Change Approach?

- Systemic school change benefits everyone — teachers, administrators, parents, and all students — by providing an opportunity to structure a school to best support an optimal teaching and learning environment.

- Systemic school change efforts can reach more students through school-wide improvement initiatives. On the other hand, alternative programs will always be oversubscribed and be at best a piecemeal effort to address the issue.

- Systemic school change more directly addresses the root causes of high dropout, suspension, absence and nonpromotion rates by changing institutional policies and practices within schools that contribute to students' decisions to drop out of school.

- Systemic change can raise the level of commitment and participation by all constituencies within a school community because it requires team-building and an inclusive planning process, with the goal of uniting a school behind common principles and beliefs.

- Systemic change provides cost-effective and lasting change by focusing on reorganizing and strengthening available resources to restructure and improve schools, rather than solely relying on outside sources of funds to create add-on programs.

Components of Systemic Change Initiatives

Systemic change initiatives take different forms within any school. Certainly such factors as a school's organizational level and size, as well as student and community background characteristics, will have tremendous influence on the types of changes to be considered. The following guidelines are offered to assist individuals in the design of systemic change in their schools. Schools are encouraged to choose those elements which best fit their needs.

Change does not happen overnight. It cannot be prescribed and implemented within the course of a week's or even a month's time. Systemic school change is not a quick fix, but rather a long-term, developmental process of innovation and school improvement.

Governance and Leadership

Schools often benefit when the individuals closest to the problems work together to plan and make decisions. This involves changes in the hierarchical governance structure that currently exists in most schools. Under a shared decision-making governance model, committees and task forces assume the function of developing recommendations for school change. Teachers, parents, community members and students are given decision-making authority over many areas of school governance such as curriculum, staffing, resource allocation, programs, and policy. This collaboration can shift the leadership and ownership of what goes on in a school from a few to a collective responsibility and results in a feeling of new power by individuals who once felt disenfranchised, isolated and alienated.

To promote a collaborative forum for educational planning and decision-making schools are encouraged to consider:

Adopting a school-based management model, with a shared decision-making structure of school governance that has control over the school budget, including administrator, staff, parent, student and community representation;

Providing training and support for the new roles the various stakeholders must assume, and

Providing more time for teachers to plan and implement ideas for change.

School Climate

Students need to feel that they are an integral part of a school, regardless of their race, age, ethnicity, culture, socioeconomic status or other unique characteristics. Consequently, a conscious effort must be made to support and model the backgrounds of all students in attendence. To promote such support, schools can:

Hire staff who reflect the ethnic, racial and language composition of the school community;

Develop curriculum that draws upon the cultural backgrounds of their students;

Design and arrange classrooms and the entire school building to celebrate and promote students' cultural diversity, and

Provide opportunities for adults to interact with students in various ways, such as mentoring, advising, and participating in extracurricular activities.

Academic, Attendance and Discipline Policies

School policies should be designed to provide support to students who are experiencing difficulties, not solely to penalize them. Recent studies emphasize that less effective schools fail to distinguish between discipline and punishment. In these schools, discipline is viewed as separate from teaching and learning. Under these circumstances, discipline becomes a struggle for power and control rather than a vehicle for building community, responsibility, and mutual respect.

In addition to adverse discipline policies, certain academic and attendance policies also tend to undermine student achievement. Non-promotion and inflexible graduation requirements too often result in certain students dropping out.

To promote policies that enhance rather than undermine student achievement, schools are encouraged to consider the following:

Promote ownership of school policy by allowing administrator, staff, student, parent, and community representative participation in the development of school policies and rules;

Establish an emphasis for discipline that is positive and corrective, rather than punitive or exclusionary, with a goal of self-discipline for all students. Provide frequent incentives and rewards to students to recognize progress and achievement;

Use suspension, both in-school and out-of-school, as a last resort and only for the most serious offenses. Emphasize alternative strategies such as conflict resolution, mediation programs, community meetings, and individual and group counseling as means to resolve problems;

Use nonpromotion as a last resort and develop contracted learning, accelerated learning, multi-age grouping, cross-age and peer tutoring, cooperative learning, and summer enrichment programs as alternatives to grade retention;

Eliminate the use of academic punishment, or the practice of withholding course credit or reducing grades as a consequence of lack of attendance. Base course grades upon a combination of homework, classwork completed, class participation and test results.

Provide counseling, schedule changes, home visits, and contracting to those students who are having trouble attending classes and school;

Provide different avenues to meet graduation requirements, including competency-based programs and a range of programs and instructional approaches. Help students develop a program of learning that ensures mastery of academic skills and allows them to pursue areas of interest and strength, and

Develop more comprehensive and sensitive exit interview procedures for students who leave school early.

School Organization

Clustering, teaming of teachers, and block scheduling are organizational features designed to promote student achievement, improve school climate, and promote collegiality among teachers.

Clustering and Teaming

Clustering is the process of creating small learning units within a large school building. Clusters may be called teams, houses or schools-within-schools, but the purposes are the same -- to help students and staff feel

a sense of community and ownership within the school. Students within clusters are heterogeneously grouped. Clustering should not result in another form of ability grouping. Clusters can be programmatically or philosophically diverse, each with its own methods of instruction. Cluster assignment usually considers student choice. Students attend their core academic classes within the cluster, but may travel outside the cluster for electives.

Teaming of staff typically involves four to five teachers who work with one another and with the same cluster of students for one or more years. Teaming has several advantages: students and teachers get to know one another better; and teachers become more accountable for monitoring student progress; develop more integrated curricula and programs; and are empowered by gaining more decision-making control over such areas as curriculum, scheduling, and school policy. Teaming also allows teachers to develop a focused approach to involving parents.

Block Scheduling

Block scheduling is a vehicle to provide flexibility in the organization of the school day and week. Typically, an uninterrupted block of time is scheduled each day for cluster courses and activities, usually core subjects. Students are scheduled for the remainder of each school day in electives. The block of cluster time is then free of a rigid schedule and allows flexible use of school hours in order to create longer and shorter periods. Block scheduling also facilitates planning of field trips, guest speakers, cluster activities, and common planning time for teachers.

School staff are encouraged to plan and design learning units, staffing patterns and schedules that best meet the unique needs of their students. Some specific suggestions follow:

Break schools down into smaller learning units and allow them to develop unique philosophical identities. Utilize block scheduling and other flexible scheduling units;

Design clusters that ensure heterogeneous grouping of students, rather than homogeneous groupings by ability; and

Create teams of teachers and provide them with common daily planning time to coordinate curricula, monitor student progress, plan cluster activities and conduct parent conferences.

Instruction

Holistic/Thematic Curriculum

Clustering, teaming and block scheduling provide teachers with opportunities to integrate subject areas into a holistic instructional approach. Under this approach, the curriculum might be organized on a thematic basis with the various subject areas focused on a common overall topic. This directs more attention onto the mastery of skills and concepts and the development of higher order thinking than on quantity of subjects taken. English, social studies, and art can all be taught under the umbrella of a humanities course, for example. In a school with several clusters, thematic units might reflect the diversity of student interests, culture, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Alternative Instructional Strategies

Researchers have encouraged the use of instructional strategies which allow students to become active rather than passive learners, and in which students of all ability groupings work together while progressing at their own individual pace.

Instruction is most effective when it responds to the diverse learning styles of students, instead of forcing students to adapt to a rigid style of learning. Uniformity of instructional strategies will invariably benefit some students while depriving others.

Some suggestions for improving curriculum and instruction follow:

Be sensitive to the developmental needs of students;

Have high expectations for all students;

Reduce fragmentation by integrating subjects to emphasize the interrelatedness of subject content, and design curriculum on a thematic basis. Integrate students' experiences, background, and culture into the curriculum content;

Set goals for reducing class sizes and courseloads of teachers;

Use a balance of instructional approaches, including peer tutoring, cooperative learning, project-based learning, learning by doing, demonstration, and individual and small group work, and encourage heterogeneous grouping;

Promote the increased use of assessment to assist teachers in determining student learning strengths and weaknesses, as well as students' mastery of presented material. Tailor the curriculum and methods of instruction to fit students' learning styles; and

Emphasize higher order thinking skills and enrichment learning, rather than remediation.

Student Support Services

Possibly the most critical element to success within a school is a student developing a close and nurturing relationship with at least one caring adult. Consequently, many schools have reorganized their guidance and counseling programs to provide students with increased support from adults.

To provide increased support to students, schools are encouraged to:

Devise guidance programs that evolve from the different developmental needs of students, are preventive as well as crisis oriented, and have an educational and a clinical focus;

Create a case management system that includes a team of school and community staff who can assess the whole person and develop appropriate individual service plans;

Develop mentor, teacher-advisor and life issues programs in order to increase supportive adult contact with students, and conduct periodic seminars for students, staff, and parents on pertinent issues, such as, drug and alcohol abuse or teen depression;

Provide staff training on the developmental growth stages of students in the respective age group with which the staff works;

Actively recruit dropouts to re-enter school. Design an easy re-entry process and place students in non-stigmatized programs;

Provide "future opportunities" education and awareness to all students that includes career education and awareness, exposure to higher education, apprenticeship and cooperative education programs, and work-study and job shadowing programs; and

Provide transitional support to students as they move from grade to grade, especially those who are moving to another school building (for example, visitations, orientations, "buddy" systems, and teacher-advisor programs).

Staff Development

Staff members need multiple opportunities for growth and development. Staff development should be an evolving process that helps school professionals identify and define problems and devise solutions. Increased staff development opportunities can recycle and revitalize staff energy, and provide forums to learn about and plan for school changes (for example, shared decision-making, team-building, reducing suspensions). More specific recommendations for staff development follow:

Provide in-service training to help staff understand the cultural and economic backgrounds of all students in the school;

Develop a comprehensive staff development plan focused upon school improvement, rather than a series of disconnected "one-shot" sessions;

Provide staff with decision-making control over the nature and substance of staff development;

Increase the range of staff development opportunities, including peer observations, visits to other programs, common team planning time, and other staff-generated learning opportunities;

Provide new staffing arrangements and roles that empower teachers, including unit and cluster leaders, master or mentor teachers, and curriculum specialists; and

Consider the development of teacher academies, in which teachers are given mini-sabbaticals to engage in structured learning programs to enhance their skills.

Parent Involvement

Parents play a crucial role in the education of their children. Consequently, schools need to actively promote parent involvement and support and take advantage of the fact that parents have a wealth of information about their children. Schools can take some of the following steps to increase parent involvement:

Provide parents with formal structures for participating in making school decisions;

Utilize parents as valuable resources who can enrich the curriculum and activities of a school;

Maintain an open-door policy to parents, encourage parents' roles as advocates for their children, and provide advocacy skills training;

Employ staff in the school who speak the range of languages in students' homes, and familiarize staff with parents' cultural backgrounds;

Conduct parent workshops on how best to support a child's education at home, and on child growth and development;

Contact parents with positive feedback, as well as with concerns, about a student's progress;

Be willing to meet parents in non-school sites as well as before or after school hours; and

Maintain a network of support service agencies for parent referral.

II. Support Diversity of Choice

The diversity of students that schools serve should be matched by a diversity of educational programs from which to choose. Alternative programs have long played a contributing role in education by offering another choice to students who are disaffected with the traditional school. These programs are characterized by their smallness, commitment to shared decision-making forms of school governance, relevant curriculum, expanded teacher roles, small class sizes, and experiential instructional strategies — all elements that are espoused within a systemic school change approach.

However, alternative programs alone cannot be expected to significantly reduce dropout rates. Ironically, the use of alternative education programs, as a sole response to dropout prevention, can indirectly support system practices that may contribute to students dropping out of school by creating the appearance that the problem has been addressed. Alternative programs, in the absence of systemic school-wide change, are largely "recuperative" and can end up masking system-wide causes of dropouts.

Consequently, educators need to redefine current notions of alternative programs to include the variety of educational choices within a school district or school building that is undergoing systemic change. For example, a school that is broken down into clusters -- each with its own philosophy, organization and curriculum -- offers multiple alternative educational options.

At the same time, a school does not necessarily have to be defined by the parameters of the school

building in which it resides. Rather, there could be several "schools" within one building, each with its unique philosophy and program, and each with its own fiscal autonomy and accountability. Off-site and community-based learning programs should also be viewed as viable, diploma-granting educational options within a school district.

When creating diversity in school and program choice, educators should ensure that:

The school or program has some freedom from standard district operating procedures, and staff have control over how the school or program is shaped;

Staff assignment is by choice, with program staff having power over staff selection;

Student assignment is voluntary, and the grouping of students is heterogeneous;

The program is small, between fifty and three hundred students, to foster a sense of community and promote supportive student-adult relationships;

The school or program has a defined space and its own schedule;

The curriculum is interdisciplinary and relevant, and teachers employ multisensory instructional strategies and emphasize enrichment learning and community involvement;

Increased student and teacher participation in school policy is promoted, in which all members are valued and expected to participate as active and responsible citizens;

The cost per student is no less than the standard district cost per student;

An annual evaluation process assesses individual student and overall program progress and success; and

Alternative programs are used as models or training grounds for identifying successful practices and replicating them throughout a school or district.

III. Build Community Support

Schools alone cannot solve the complex problems that lead students to drop out. An increased awareness that school dropouts are a community-wide dilemma must be developed. Schools need to extend beyond the school walls and forge partnerships with community agencies, businesses, higher education institutions and municipalities to increase the resources available to better serve all students. Similarly, these other groups need to reach out to the schools to offer assistance.

School-Community Teams

A community-wide planning approach is needed in which schools and community institutions come together in broad-based interagency teams to plan and implement long-term strategies to improve the quality of schooling, coordinate services for students, and prepare students for future opportunities. These teams are encouraged to:

Represent all school and community constituencies -- school administrators, teachers, parents, students, community agencies, business, higher education, and the municipality -- focusing upon those institutions with which a school-agency collaboration would result in increased coordination of services and resources for schools and at-risk students; and

Represent the racial, ethnic and gender diversity of the community and the student population.

Their tasks can include:

Assessing local needs and assisting in designing a comprehensive and coordinated plan for lowering dropout rates;

Developing a coordinated service delivery system among various organizations and institutions to increase services to more students, decrease duplication and cross-purpose efforts, and improve coordination and communication among agencies;

Leveraging community institutions to provide additional resources to schools and to at-risk students, and to explore new sources of funds; and

Garnering widespread community support for public education and existing initiatives to help students succeed in school.

Partnerships

Every community, large or small, has a wealth of resources to offer to a school. Partnerships between schools and other community agencies and institutions can provide new programs and services for students. Schools can forge partnerships with the following:

Businesses to provide employment and training, mentorships, tutoring, scholarships, leadership-training, staff development grants, adopt-a-school programs, apprenticeships, career awareness, co-operative education programs, and mini-grants to teachers;

Higher education institutions to provide staff development, college students as tutors, innovative learning programs, college exposure, summer enrichment programs, scholarships, and recruitment of minority students;

Community agencies to provide supportive services to students and their families, including alternative education programs, counseling, medical and mental health services, child care, employment training, and housing assistance; and

Municipalities to provide recreational and youth corps activities and programs, and coordination between school and summer programs.

Chapter 3

Planning for Change and Improvement

A dropout prevention initiative within a school, district or community should be the result of a thoughtful and planned process that has included the input of as many people as possible. The goal of a planning process is to develop a common vision within a school and community for change and improvement. It is important that the initiative involves staff from elementary, middle, and high schools. While dropouts evidence themselves in high school, the pattern is often established earlier. The following is one model for schools and communities to consider in planning for change.

Step I. Form a School Improvement Team

A team representing a cross-section of the school, district or community is formed to assess and plan improvements. The team includes principal, teacher, staff, parent, student, and community representation. Its composition reflects the racial, ethnic, and gender diversity of the community and the student population. While it is ideal to have broad-based support for change, a planning team can move forward with a core group of motivated participants. To be successful, teams need to garner the support of central office staff and the school committee.

Step II. Conduct a School-Community Needs Assessment

Assessment is an important part of initiating change. Listed below are several approaches that may be used in an assessment process.

A. Develop a Common Framework and Knowledge Base

Read a sampling of the current literature on dropout prevention and school improvement and restructuring in order to develop a common framework and knowledge base. Visit other schools that have innovative programs within and outside the district. This will be useful later on when developing an action plan.

B. Review Student-Community Data and Other Pertinent Information

Collect student data and other pertinent information about the school and community. Such data might include but not be limited to: student and community demographic characteristics; test score results; attendance, truancy, suspension, retention, and dropout statistics; discipline and attendance policies; curricula goals and objectives; and the school mission or philosophy. Whenever possible, the data should be broken down by appropriate subpopulations: grade, racial/ethnic groupings, gender, and program (special education/regular education/occupational education).

Information concerning the school's organization and management systems, as they affect student learning, might also be collected. For example, hiring procedures, staffing patterns and responsibilities, decision-making structures, community linkages, student groupings and classroom scheduling might be identified.

C. Survey Faculty, Student, and Parent/Community Perceptions

Survey administrators, teachers, students, and parents to determine their perceptions of the school. It is recommended that the surveys be structured around such school effectiveness variables as instructional leadership, school climate, expectations of students and staff, curricula goals, monitoring of student progress, and school-community relations.

D. Interview Key People

Interview individuals who are in a position to know the needs of the school and the community. These persons might include teachers, parents, students, superintendents, principals, custodians, school committee members, curriculum coordinators, business leaders, higher education representatives, community agency leaders, and municipal officials.

E. Conduct Public Meetings

Conduct one or a series of public meetings to which members of the community are invited and asked to express their ideas about the needs of the school, district and community.

Once all data has been collected and assembled, the team should synthesize and analyze it. Decisions about problem areas the plan will address should be made after careful assessment of the information.

Step III. Develop a Plan for Change and Improvement

The assessment results become the foundation from which the team develops a plan of systemic school change and community collaboration. This action plan should detail a three to five year vision of change and improvement, including the steps and timeline of how that vision will be reached.

Step IV. Gain Local Support and Approval of the Plan

Design a process for school and community review of the plan. Such a process will result in refinement of the plan, as well as public support for its implementation. Once the plan has been reviewed and refined, gain approval of the plan by the school committee and other appropriate bodies.

Step V. Implement the Plan

Usually it is best to pilot new programs or approaches and phase in full implementation. Or, a school or community may choose to conduct intensive professional development prior to wide-scale implementation of the plan.

Step VI. Evaluation and Replication

The plan and its implementation should be evaluated annually to ensure that progress and desired outcomes are occurring. Based upon initial findings, plan improvements are made and the initiative is replicated on a school, district, or community-wide basis.

Through a comprehensive process of team-building, assessment, planning, implementation, evaluation, and replication, schools and communities can assess those areas that may contribute to students dropping out of school, and create a visionary plan for school improvement and change that is embraced by the entire school community.

Conclusion

The scope and gravity of the dropout problem has been presented in this handbook. Given the magnitude of the problem, a new approach to dropout prevention is required. This approach calls for a bold vision of the future in which:

All school and community members — parents, students, community representatives, and school staff — are contributing participants in revitalizing their schools;

Shared decision-making empowers all stakeholders to take responsibility and ownership over school improvement;

Community partnerships infuse new ideas and resources into schools;

School restructuring creates environments that are shaped to meet the needs of students, instead of vice-versa; and

A wide array of schools and programs allows parents and students greater choice in matching individual needs with appropriate programs.

The goal of dropout prevention is to provide a challenging and exciting learning environment for all students by having high expectations and providing the support needed to achieve and succeed. This is a vision in which effective schools are for everyone, not just the privileged.

Schools and communities that take on this challenge are not alone. This is not unfamiliar or uncharted territory. Exciting work is already underway. More and more schools and communities are grappling

with what it means to construct an environment that helps every student reach his or her potential. Much can be learned from these examples that may be replicated in other schools and communities.

The Commonwealth's effort to embrace a systemic school change and community partnership approach to dropout prevention is a pioneering one. You are invited to help break new ground and build for a better future.

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Appendix A

Resources on Dropout Prevention/Restructuring

The following section provides a listing of resources that may be useful to schools and communities that are undertaking dropout prevention initiatives. The listing is not meant to be an official endorsement of organizations and programs or intended to be inclusive, rather it offers a sampling of resources to use in getting an initiative off the ground. For additional listings, call the Department's Bureau of Student Development and Health (617-770-7580).

Community Partnerships

City Lights
University of Massachusetts
Office of the President
250 Stuart Street
Boston, MA 02116
(617) 482-8400
Contact: Robert Gaudet, Assistant to the President

City Lights is a university-school partnership with three high schools (Dorchester High, Worcester South High, and Holyoke High Schools) to improve the quality of teachers' professional lives and their students' classroom experiences.

Cambridge Human Services Collaborative
Cambridge Public Schools
159 Thorndike Street
Cambridge, MA 02141
(617) 498-9200
Contact: Jody Lally, Director

The Cambridge Human Services Collaborative provides community agency representation on Student Support Teams based in every Cambridge Public School, and brings agency services into school buildings.

Holyoke Citywide Parent Planning Council
Holyoke Public Schools
98 Suffolk Street
Holyoke, MA 01040
(413) 534-2064
Contact: Lora Barrett, Parent Coordinator

The Holyoke Public Schools have developed a dynamic partnership with parents through a city-wide parent planning council which provides input on district policy and decision-making, and operates parent advisory councils in every school, outreach workers to facilitate home/school communication, and a parent information center.

Lynn Business/Education Foundation
20 Wheeler Street
Lynn, MA 01902
(617) 595-0484
Contact: Harry MacCabe, Director

The Lynn Business/Education Foundation is a school-business partnership to enhance the personal and educational growth of the city's youth through mini-grants for teachers and PTOs, adopt-a-school activities, career development programs, and public information.

Organizations Providing Technical Assistance

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
Restructuring Consortium Project
1250 North Pitt Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314
(703) 549-9110
Contact: Diane Berreth, Director of Field Services

The goal of the Restructuring Consortium Project is to enhance collegial leadership skills and to establish exemplary programs based on research and best practice. The Blackstone Community School in Boston is a project school.

Center for Early Adolescence
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Suite 223, Carr Mill Mall
Carrboro, NC 27510
(919) 966-1148
Contact: Sue Rosenzweig

The Center has conducted extensive research, offers numerous publications, and provides staff development on effective middle schools, early adolescence and at-risk students. In particular, they offer the Middle Grades Assessment Program which is a useful and comprehensive assessment tool to stimulate long-term school planning and improvement efforts.

Center for Research on Elementary and Middle Schools
John Hopkins University
3505 N. Charles Street
Baltimore, MD 21218
Contact: Robert Slavin, Director

The Center provides research and technical assistance on the use of cooperative learning, which has been found to be successful in raising academic achievement for all students, but especially for poor and minority students. The Center also works with schools to implement a school-wide program, Success For All, which emphasizes ongoing assessment of student progress, a school-wide facilitator for school improvement, a reading program, and a family support team.

Coalition of Essential Schools
Education Department
Brown University
Box 1938
Providence, RI 02912
(401) 863-3384
Contact: Paula Evans

The Coalition was founded by Theodore Sizer, a professor at Brown University, under the motto, "Less is more." The Coalition emphasizes reduced teacher loads, teacher as coach and facilitator, student as worker, reduced fragmentation of the curriculum, personalized learning and mastery of essential skills. The Coalition provides technical assistance, seminars, and a newsletter to member schools.

Education Development Center, Inc.
55 Chapel Street
Newton, MA
(617) 969-7100
Contact: Katherine Hanson

EDC works with selected districts to develop dropout prevention strategies, focusing primarily upon the formation of School Action Teams and the creation of a school community model of systemic change. EDC also has programs on gender-fair education and multi-cultural awareness.

Hispanic Office of Planning and Evaluation
55 Dimock Street
Roxbury, MA 02119
(617) 442-9401
Contact: Jose Duran, Executive Director

HOPE conducts research around the specific needs of Puerto Rican at-risk youth.

Hofstra Center for the Study of Educational Alternatives
Hofstra University
Hempstead, New York 11550
(516) 560-5740
Contact: Mary Ann Raywid, Director

The Center conducts research on alternative education practices throughout the nation, and provides technical assistance to school districts interested in restructuring.

Institute for Responsive Education
705 Commonwealth Avenue
Boston, MA 02215
(617) 353-3309
Contact: Don Davies, Executive Director

The Institute works to promote stronger collaborations between schools and parents and communities.

Massachusetts Advocacy Center
76 Summer Street
Boston, MA 02110
(617) 357-8431
Contact: Anne Wheelock, Policy Analyst

The Center has conducted extensive research on the impact of punitive school policies on at-risk students, as well as on effective middle schools as an approach to dropout prevention. Their publications include *The Way Out: Student Exclusion Practices in Boston Middle Schools* and *Before It's Too Late: Dropout Prevention In The Middle Grades.*

Metropolitan Indochinese Children and Adolescent Services
276 Broadway
Chelsea, MA 02150
(617) 889-2760
Contact: Holly Lockwood, Director

MICAS provides technical assistance to schools serving Southeast Asian refugee children.

National Association of Mediation in Education
425 Amity Street
Amherst, MA 01002
(413) 545-2462
Contact: Ann Gibson, Executive Director

NAME promotes the integration of mediation within schools as an alternative to traditional routes of discipline and conflict resolution. Mediation has been found to lower discipline problems and suspensions rates. NAME provides a clearinghouse of information, a newsletter, and periodic conferences.

National Association of State Boards of Education
Female At-Risk Project
1012 Cameron Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314
(703) 684-4000
Contact: Janice Earle, Project Director

The Female At-Risk Project has worked with ten states to develop state action plans to improve schools to better serve the needs of female students. One of their most recent publications is *Female Dropouts: A New Perspective*.

National Center for Effective Secondary Schools
1025 West Johnson Street
Room 659
Madison, Wisconsin 53706
(608) 263-7575
Contact: Gary Whelage, Director

The Center has conducted an extensive research on the need to replicate successful alternative education practices in secondary schools. Their most recent publication is *Reducing the Risk: Schools as Communities of Support*.

National Coalition of Advocates for Students
100 Boylston Street, Suite 737
Boston, MA 02116
(617) 357-8507
Contact: Joan First, Executive Director

NCAS has conducted extensive research on the impact of school policies and practices on at-risk students, including the publication of *New Voices: Immigrant Students in U.S. Public Schools*. They also publish a periodic newsletter which highlights research around at-risk students and effective schools.

National Dropout Prevention Network and National Dropout Prevention Center
Clemson University
Clemson, SC 29634-0725
(803) 656-2599
Contact: Ray Eberhard, Executive Director
National Dropout Prevention Network
or Jay Smink, Executive Director
National Dropout Prevention Center

The Center and Network work hand in hand. The Center is a clearinghouse of information on dropouts and dropout prevention. The Network shares information and current research on existing dropout prevention efforts across the nation. It publishes a newsletter and sponsors national and regional forums on dropout prevention.

Regional Laboratory for Educational Improvement of the Northeast and Islands
290 South Main Street
Andover, MA 01810
(508) 470-0098
Contact: Leslie Hergert, Director
At-Risk Youth Initiative

The Regional Lab works with selected districts to develop dropout prevention strategies, and acts as a clearinghouse of information on current dropout prevention research and initiatives. They are also producers of a simulated game, Making Change, which helps educators understand the school change process.

Yale Child Study Center
Yale University
New Haven, CT
(203) 785-2548
Contact: James Comer, Professor

James Comer and the Child Study Center have worked with the New Haven Public Schools for the past twenty years to develop a model of school improvement that is successful for at-risk students and schools. The Comer model centers upon a school governance team, the development of a long-range school improvement plan, a mental health team, and strong parent involvement. The Center provides speakers, technical assistance, and resources.

Selected Schools that have undertaken Restructuring Efforts

The following list of schools have all undertaken restructuring efforts. They are not necessarily "model schools," but have committed themselves to a process of school change and improvement.

Bartlett Middle School
79 Wannalancit
Lowell, MA 01854
(508) 937-8968
Contact: Lisa Bryant, Principal

The Bartlett Middle School serves 100 students in an innovative enrichment program on Saturdays at the University of Lowell. The success of this program has led them to cluster the entire student body and team staff, develop interdisciplinary curriculum, begin advisor-advisee and school-based mediation programs, and explore innovative instructional stratagies including cooperative learning. The school has also developed partnerships with community agencies, businesses and universities.

Central Park East
1573 Madison Avenue
New York, NY 10029
(212) 348-7821
Contact: Deborah Meier, Principal

Central Park East serves grades 7-12. The school is clustered, and governed by a shared decision-making model. The school is a member of the Coalition of Essential Schools, and emphasizes teacher as coach, student as worker, mastery of skills, reduced course fragmentation, and community services.

Dorchester High School
9 Peacevale Road
Dorchester, MA 02124
(617) 436-2065
Contact: Stanley Swartz, Principal

Dorchester High School participates in the City Lights Project, sponsored by the University of

Massachusetts, which supports school-based management. The school has clustered grades nine and ten, teamed staff, and provided each team with daily common planning time to monitor student progress, plan cluster activities, and develop interdisciplinary curriculum. All ninth graders participate in a Keys To Excellence program which stresses problem solving and conflict resolution. The school has a mentor program and parent outreach workers, and coordinates closely with community-based alternative education programs. The school is in the process of developing a competency-based curriculum and program for overage and behind-grade level students .

Graham and Parks Alternative Public School
15 Upton Street
Cambridge, MA 02139
(617) 498-9271
Contact: Len Solo, Principal

Graham and Parks is one of Cambridge's elementary schools, and serves grades K-8. The school is a Carnegie School, which emphasizes shared decision-making and new roles for teachers. The school has a Steering Committee as the decision-making body, with parent, staff and administrator representation. Elements of the school include multi-grade groupings, teaming, open classrooms in the lower grades, active parent involvement, and an emphasis on innovative instruction and interdisciplinary curriculum. The grades seven and eight program adopts many middle school components, and has mediation and apprenticeship programs, and a Community Meeting form of governance.

Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School
77 Lawrence Avenue
Dorchester, MA 02121
(617) 445-4120
Contact: Steven Leonard, Principal

The Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School is a Carnegie School which emphasizes shared decision-making and new roles for teachers. The faculty operate within a committee structure to create a school which responds to the needs of its students. They use a Student Support Team case management model and a school-based mediation program for providing support services to students in need. Three business-education partnerships provide additional resources to the school.

Middle School of the Kennebunks
87 Fletcher Street
Kennebunk, ME 04046
(207) 985-2912
Contact: Sandra Caldwell, Principal

The entire school is clustered, with teacher teams assigned to each cluster. Each team has daily common planning time and autonomy and flexibility over curriculum, instruction, activities, and scheduling. The curriculum has a strong interdisciplinary emphasis, and uses the rich resources within the community. The school also has teacher-advisor and community service programs. The school is part of John Goodlad's National Network for Educational Renewal.

Mount Everett Regional School
P.O. Box 239
Sheffield, MA 01257
(413) 229-8734
Contact: Wayne Eline, Principal

Mount Everett serves grades seven through twelve, and is also a Carnegie School. The school has a circular structure of shared decision-making that includes input from staff, students, parents, community members, and administrators. Initiatives that are being explored include interdisciplinary staff

teaming, heterogeneous grouping of students, a developmental guidance program, and flexible scheduling.

Timilty Middle School
205 Roxbury Street
Roxbury, MA 02119
(617) 445-3114
Contact: Mary Grassa-O'Neil, Principal

The Timilty School operates a school-wide program, Project Promise, in which all students commit themselves to attending a longer school day and school on Saturdays, and the school promises to raise students' achievement levels. The school clusters all students, has teacher teams assigned to each cluster, emphasizes thematic interdisciplinary curriculum and writing across the curriculum, and has strong parent involvement and a staff development program.

The following three listings are examples of district-wide restructuring efforts:

Cambridge Public Schools
159 Thorndike Street
Cambridge, MA 02141
(617) 498-9228
Contact: Sandra Spooner, Assistant Superintendent

Cambridge's Hooked On School program operates in eight Cambridge K-8 elementary schools to provide definition to grades seven and eight. Elements of the program include school-based planning and management; mechanisms for increasing parent involvement; curriculum enhancement inside and outside the classroom; teacher teaming; student empowerment through governance, mediation, and community-building programs; Student Support Teams linked to community agencies; and orienta-

tion and support programs for eighth graders entering the high school.

Malden Public Schools
77 Salem Street
Malden, MA 02148
(617) 397-7271
Contact: Barry Ring, Coordinator of Middle Schools

Malden has transitioned all three of their junior high schools to middle schools serving grades six through eight. Each school has been clustered, with teacher teams assigned to each cluster. Each team has a unit leader, and is given daily common planning time. Teams focus upon monitoring student progress, conducting parent conferences, planning cluster activities, and developing interdisciplinary curriculum. Counseling groups are conducted by social workers from a community-based agency.

Office of Staff Development
New Haven Public Schools
200 Orange Street
New Haven, CT 06510
(203) 787-8441
Contact: Marco Palmieri, Director

This Office, along with Professor James Comer of Yale University's Child Study Center, has coordinated school improvement efforts in New Haven. Each school is encouraged to adopt a school-based planning process around school restructuring, including school governance and mental health teams, long-term school planning to raise academic achievement, and parent involvement. While the original schools were elementary schools, recently the Office is working to implement this initiative within the city's middle and high schools.

State Agency Grant Programs

Carnegie Schools Grant Program
Massachusetts Department of Education
1385 Hancock Street
Quincy, MA 02169
(617) 770-7536
Contact: Carole Thomson, Executive Director, Division of School Programs

The Carnegie School Program provides grants to schools to promote shared decision-making, expanded roles for teachers, and new ways of learning for students.

Chapter 188 Dropout Prevention Grant Program
Massachusetts Department of Education
1385 Hancock Street
Quincy, MA 02169
(617) 770-7589
Contact: Dan French, Dropout Prevention Specialist

This grant program provides discretionary funds to districts with high percentages of low-income students and school dropouts to undertake systemic school change initiatives.

Commonwealth Futures
Office of Educational Affairs
State House, Room 173
Boston, MA 02133
(617) 727-0806
Contact: Terry Grobe, Director

Commonweatlh Futures provides coordinated interagency state funding to 13 communities to develop and implement comprehensive, K-12 dropout prevention and re-entry plans.

Commonwealth Inservice Institute
Massachusetts Department of Education
1385 Hancock Street
Quincy, MA 02169
(617) 770-7569
Contact: Patricia Brown, Project Director

The Institute provides inservice training funds to teachers. A special category of funding, Improving Schools by Developing New Roles and Structures, provides staff development funds for systemic change initiatives.

Appendix B

Suggested Readings

Center for the Study of Social Policy. Annie E. Casey's New Futures Initiative: Strategic Planning Guide. Center for the Study of Social Policy. Washington, D.C., 1987.
A state-of-the-art paper which gives an overview of America's at-risk youth problems, and recommends systemic, comprehensive changes to improve achievement, prevent teen pregnancies, enhance youth employment, and design case management systems.

Comer, James. Educating Poor Minority Children. Scientific American, Vol. 259, No. 5, November 1988.
Describes Comer's project in working with New Haven elementary schools to restructure themselves to support parents and respond flexibly and creatively to student needs.

Janice Earle. Female Dropouts: A New Perspective. National Association of State Boards of Education, 1987.
Suggests that pregnant or parenting girls who drop out of school experience school rejection and school failure first, and then turn to other life options of which pregnancy becomes one. Suggests that traditional school structures are male-oriented and do not necessarily serve female learning needs.

Felice, Lawrence. Black Student Dropout Behavior: Disengagement From School Rejection and Racial Discrimination. The Journal of Negro Education, 1981.
Describes how Black students who drop out tend to view the educational process and mobility ladder as nothing more than a frustrating cul de sac, and

American society as a closed system within which they will be denied participation, regardless of their educational background.

Harvey, Glen and Crandall, David. A Beginning Look at the What and How of Restructuring. Regional Laboratory for Educational Improvement of the Northeast and Islands, Andover, MA, 1988.
Reviews the need for school restructuring, and outlines a process for, and the components of, restructuring.

Hess. Alfred, Jr. Dropouts From The Chicago Public Schools: An Analysis of the Classes of 1982, 1983, 1984. Chicago Board of Education, 1985.
Details the results of a longitudinal study from grades nine through twelve of three classes. Suggests that the most prominent indicators of a school dropout are being overage and reading below grade level. Notes that there are clear differences in dropout rates between "like" schools that are related to school policies and practices.

Illinois Fair Schools Coalition. Holding Students Back: An Expensive School Reform That Doesn't Work. Illinois Fair Schools Coalition, Chicago, IL, 1985.
Describes the impact on students of grade retention, and recommends alternative strategies for dealing with students who are academically failing.

Massachusetts Advocacy Center and the Center for Early Adolescence. Before It's Too Late: Dropout Prevention In The Middle Grades. Massachusetts Advocacy Center, 76 Summer Street, Boston, MA 02110, 1988.
Describes current research on dropout prevention and middle schools, arguing that the best approach to

dropout prevention is restructuring middle grades schools to respond to the developmental needs of early adolescents.

Massachusetts Advocacy Center. The Way Out: Student Exclusion Practices in Boston's Middle Schools. Massachusetts Advocacy Center, Boston, MA, May, 1986.
Documents the impact of suspension, nonpromotion, and attendance policies on Boston's middle school population, and recommends new structures and policies that embrace the middle school philosophy.

National Coalition of Advocates for Students. New Voices: Immigrant Students in U.S. Public Schools. NCAS, Boston, MA., 1988.
Documents the encounter between the children of the great immigration wave of the 1970's and 1980's and U.S. public schools, and offers recommendations for change in school policy and practice.

Natriello, Gary (ed.). School Dropouts: Patterns and Policies. Teachers, College Press, New York, N.Y., 1986.
This volume contains an excellent series of articles on current dropout prevention research, including discussion of who drops out of school, the impact of raising standards on dropouts, and data collection and statistics.

Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education. Dealing With Dropouts: The Urban Superintendent's Call To Action. U.S. Department of Education, Washington, D.C., 1987.
Details six strategies for addressing at-risk youth, including intervening early, creating a positive school climate, setting high expectations, developing effective teachers, providing a broad range of programming, and initiating collaborative efforts.

Providence Dropout Prevention Collaborative, Dr. Marcia Marker Feld, Study Director.
The Providence Dropout Prevention Plan: Strategies and Programs for K-12 At-Risk Students. Providence, Rhode Island, 1987.
This is an excellent example of a comprehensive school-community plan. The plan describes the planning process, in-school experiences of dropouts and at risk students, school policies and procedures that may affect at risk students' chances of graduating, dropout prevention strategies and programs, and the implementation of the plan.

Shedlin, Allan et al. The School As Locus Of Advocacy For All Children. Elementary School Center, New York, N.Y., 1988
Argues that the traditional structure of schools is archaic, and does not respond to the pressing needs of the youth of today. Stresses that schools should be restructured to address the whole child and should play an aggressive role of advocate in leveraging new resources for children.

Whelage, Gary et al. Reducing the Risk: Schools as Communities of Support. Falmer Press, Philadelphia, PA, 1989.
Documents the need to replicate successful alternative education practices in high schools.

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